PART THREE

Visual Transactions

8

Into the Labyrinth: Phantasmagoria at Expo 67

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One of the notable characteristics of the pavilions at Expo 67 was the preponderance of multi-screened film presentations. But, as journalist Robert Fulford noted, this was not a new feature of international exhibitions:

> By now the multi-screen cinema was no surprise to anyone. At Expo it was everywhere. There had been multi-screen before – not only at New York but at Brussels in 1958 and at earlier fairs, including one in Paris three decades before, and in a few isolated feature films – but this time multi-screen was a dominant factor rather than a special attraction. This time, we were present not at the introduction but at the development of a new cinematic language.[1]

Among the pavilions using multiple screen displays the most popular, according to the Expo Corporation's rough-and-ready surveys,[2] was the Telephone Association of Canada with the 'film' *Canada 67* (see plate 16). This display was by Walt Disney Studios and used their 'Circle-Vision 360°' film technique, 'in which the screens completely surround the viewer [and] gives him [*sic*] the feeling of actually participating in such typically Canadian events as a National Hockey League game, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Musical Ride, the Calgary Stampede, the Quebec Winter Carnival, etc.'[3] For Fulford this was a 'cinematic hymn to the glories of Canada, so blatant in its chauvinism that one could hardly imagine Canadians producing it.'[4] Already it is worth noting that the commentary on expanded cinema at Expo routinely emphasizes the paucity of a display's content (in terms of images and ideas), which is seen in marked contrast to the power, excitement, and effectiveness of its phenomenal form. The Kaleidoscope pavilion, sponsored by various Canadian chemical firms, overcame this discrepancy by abstracting their reference to the outside world and creating 'a psychedelic experience without LSD,'[5] 'a horizonless adventure in incredible colour, motion and sound.'[6] Other notable pavilions using expanded cinematic forms were the Czechoslovakia pavilion (fig. 8.1), which in one display combined twin screens with multiple-choice narrative options (to be voted for by the audience); the Canadian Pacific – Cominco pavilion, which used Francis Thompson and Alexander Hammid's six-screen presentation *We Are Young!*; and the U.S. pavilion's three-screen film *A Time to Play* by Art Kane.

8.1 The multi-screen display in the Czechoslovakia pavilion.
Image from: Jean-Louis de Lorimier, *Expo 67: The Memorial Album/L'album memorial* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Canada, 1967).

The pavilion that seemed to make most demands on the interpretative skills of professional commentators and Expo visitors, and also produced the longest queues, was the National Film Board of Canada's *Labyrinth*. It was *Labyrinth* that seemed to speak most emphatically and eloquently of a new, exciting, yet uncertain, media form. For Fulford it was, 'a kind of a dream, or a nightmare, or maybe a secular religious ceremony.'[7] For Bill Bantey, the editor of *Montréal* (a magazine designed to promote and celebrate all aspects of Expo), writing before Expo 67 opened, *Labyrinth* was going to have a privileged place in the exhibition. This is Montreal as it prepares local audiences for *Labyrinth* in the run-up to the opening of Expo:

> Few spectacles at the exhibition will surpass *Labyrinth* for sheer excitement. Revolutionary film techniques will be screened in a monumental concrete building as cav-

> ernous as a Gothic cathedral. In one chamber, viewers will be elevated to a ramp 40 feet above the floor where they will view images on a 60-foot screen in front of them and simultaneously a projection on an equally vast screen below. In a second huge chamber [the third chamber in the actual pavilion], films will play on five screens at once.
>
> Ramps in *Labyrinth* lead to mazes where a system of reflecting mirrors and flashing lights will give the visitor the sensation of being surrounded by elusive iridescent images. In one corridor, transparent glass floors, ceilings and walls will eradicate all sense of perspective. Sound effects are calculated to evoke a series of moods: Fear, joy, awe. The mazes have been designed to communicate a new perspective on life in the modern world.[8]

Labyrinth lived up to Bantey's prediction. The pavilion was enormously popular even though it was a slow process getting in to see it. Jeffrey Stanton, for instance, remembers visiting the *Labyrinth* pavilion with his parents:

> The lines for this movie were often two, three, even four hours long. And as those who exited the *Labyrinth* often came up to those waiting patiently in line and reassured them that the wait was worth it. The night that I saw the film, my parents and I waited nearly two hours in line. Young people enjoyed the movie more than older people who were often somber after thinking about their advancing age. Children found the movie confusing, yet hardly anyone really understood what it was all about.[9]

Besides the long wait, the common experience of visiting *Labyrinth* was a mixture of bewitchment and bewilderment. The recognition that a display could be hugely popular, absolutely compelling, while also confusing and without a readily describable message, exemplifies a key characteristic of some of the most important displays in international exhibitions in the modern age. More generally, I want to claim that *Labyrinth* makes vivid and visceral a form of address that has been (and still is) a central component of modern industrial and capitalist culture.

One way of situating *Labyrinth* would be to see it as an exemplary instance within a history of immersive and virtual display forms. 'Immersion' is the favoured term of media historian and theorist Oliver Grau in his book *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*. Prompted by a desire to understand the latest computer-based media, and impatient with bombastic claims that blindly assert computer culture as absolutely innovatory, Grau uses 'immersion' as a way of recognizing phenomenological continuities and discontinuities between disparate media. By looking at immersive forms across history (from Roman wall painting, through panoramas, and on to recent artworks using virtual reality technology), Grau inoculates himself against the twin pathologies of media studies: to mistakenly posit the present as the new (underwritten by a linear history of media progression); or, inversely, to only see the age-old. Both pathologies suffer from a failure to recognize the specific qualities of display forms. Grau's historical approach is designed to reveal both old and new media forms in a new light. In his privileging of the immersive quality of new media forms, older media are reconfigured in the process: 'Older

media, such as frescoes, paintings, panoramas, film, and the art they convey, do not appear passé; rather, they are newly defined, categorized, and interpreted. Understood in this way, new media do not render old ones obsolete, but rather assign them new places within the system.'[10] The work of Grau and others[11] combines media archaeology with media theory and does much to interrupt the linear narrative of media progression. This is crucial, I think, for understanding pavilions like *Labyrinth* because it refuses to see them primarily as a forerunner to something else (IMAX cinema, for instance) or as a straightforward continuation of previous world exhibition pavilions. Yet because 'immersion' is primarily concerned with the phenomenological character of display, Grau's analysis is not driven by a need to explain the social role of immersive display forms. While Grau gives us a much more complex history of media and a more nuanced understanding of present-day media practice, 'immersion' never fully spills out into the larger social world.[12]

To my mind the term 'phantasmagoria' offers a more productive and critical context for the study of *Labyrinth* because, while the term includes a phenomenological orientation (phantasmagoria necessarily includes some form of enchantment or bewitchment), it also links the phantasmagoric to some of the key features of modern industrial culture – widespread technological mediation, the commodity form, the contradictory amalgam of reason and superstition, the dream-like quality of its entertainments, and so on. Since Marx's claim that commodities were phantasmagoric, the term has been used in cultural theory (however unevenly) to designate a form peculiar to capitalist society. To privilege phantasmagoria, then, is to insist that analysis takes a socially critical perspective. It was this perspective that the German cultural critic and historian Walter Benjamin most famously developed, and it is Benjamin who most persuasively deployed the term to understand the importance of world exhibitions for modern capitalist culture. So before returning to Expo 67 I need to flesh out my belief that it will be the deployment of phantasmagoria (as a critical category) that will lead us into and out of the labyrinth.

Phantasmagoria and Critical Theory

When in 1867 Marx wrote that the commodity form – that motor of capitalism – transformed 'a definite social relation between men' into 'the phantasmagoric form of a relationship between things,'[13] the popularity of the original phantasmagorias had long faded. The original phantasmagorias were stage shows that conjured phantoms out of the ether using magic lanterns, mirrors, smoke, and gossamer cloth. Their novelty and popularity lasted from the 1790s and into the early 1800s, to be superseded by panoramas, stereoscopes, and other visual technologies.[14] The phantasmagoria traded on a contradiction: they used the rhetoric of science and the latest technology to make ghosts manifest. For Marx there was a clear analogy here for the way that inorganic 'things' became animate and magical when they became commodities. We only need to think of present-day television advertisements for contemporary examples of the way commodity culture enlivens the most inanimate of things.[15] Phantasmagorias were not just a trick of light, producing ghostly movement by wheeling the lantern forward so that the

phantoms grew progressively larger; they were also a trick of address. Spectators were invited to see a scientific display which would demystify the spirit world: what they saw seemed to confirm their most atavistic superstitions.[16] Technology, it seemed, was determined to make manifest 'the ghost in the machine.'

It was Walter Benjamin who most clearly saw the way that the term phantasmagoria could be used as a central figure for understanding the attractions and distractions of modern industrial culture. While Benjamin was clearly indebted to Marx in a number of ways, he also courted the thought of other writers, not least the sociologist (and Benjamin's former teacher) Georg Simmel. In the 1930s Benjamin worked intensely on his unfinished project investigating the prehistory and emergence of modernity in nineteenth-century Paris – the *Arcades Project*. The idea of phantasmagoria was one of its central motifs. It is worth quoting at some length from Benjamin's 'Exposé of 1939: Paris Capital of the Nineteenth Century' to get a sense of the term's importance for Benjamin:

> Our investigation proposes to show how … new forms of behaviour and the new economically and technologically based creations that we owe to the nineteenth century enter the universe of a phantasmagoria. These creations undergo this 'illumination' not only in a theoretical manner, by an ideological transposition, but also in the immediacy of their perceptible presence. They are manifest as phantasmagorias. Thus appear the arcades – first entry in the field of iron construction; thus appear the world exhibitions, whose link to the entertainment industry is significant. Also included in this order of phenomena is the experience of the flâneur, who abandons himself to the phantasmagoria of the marketplace. Corresponding to these phantasmagorias of the market, where people appear only as types, are the phantasmagorias of the interior, which constituted by man's imperious need to leave the imprint of his private individual existence on the rooms he inhabits. As for the phantasmagoria of civilization itself, it found its champion in Haussmann and its manifest expression in his transformation of Paris.[17]

This overview of the themes that the *Arcades Project* explores shows just how ubiquitous phantasmagoria was for Benjamin: there it was in new shopping complexes (Arcades), in world exhibitions (and other entertainment forms), in the meandering activities of city wanderers (and perhaps most insistently in the practice of window shoppers), in domestic decoration, and in city planning. So while the original phantasmagoria has been tied into a history of cinematic and pre-cinematic forms,[18] Benjamin extends the idea of the phantasmagoric to designate characteristic phantasmatic relationships between human subjects and their environment. This will be crucial for understanding *Labyrinth*.

But why should all these activities get categorized as phantasmagoric? What does Benjamin hope to achieve by stretching out the term in this way? If you had to highlight one specific theme in the *Arcades Project*, and in Benjamin's work more generally, then there would be good reason for highlighting the theme of experience and what Benjamin sees as the death of experience within modern industrial culture.[19] This is not the place to explore this systematically, but we can note some insights here that will be important to a discussion of phantasmagoria and

link it to the troubled fate of modern experience. One is that Benjamin sees a continuum of cultural forms that seem to jeopardize a traditional idea of experience. To be clear: Benjamin does not think that experience is *quantitatively* diminished in modern life (quite the opposite: human beings are bombarded by much more sense stimuli, for instance), but he does see the *quality* of experience (what we can *make* from the sense stimuli we receive, for example) as being impoverished. Thus, experience, as a growing knowledge that could lead to wisdom and to communicative material, is withering away. The industrial factory or mechanized warfare cannot accommodate experience in this second sense, even though anyone would agree that in terms of immediate (and unprocessed) experience they constitute a brutal intensification of what went before. Because we cannot take our distance from this immediate world, we have difficulty finding reflexive forms for understanding it, which leaves us caught in the deep sleep of the capitalist dreamworld. The original phantasmagoria promised knowledge and demystification but sent the viewer reeling back to the myths of old. The continuation of the phantasmagoria, in all its different forms, works to sustain the fantasy of rational modernization. It casts a spell over us, offering us a cornucopia of beneficial devices, entertainment, and knowledge, but (for the most part) delivering mere phantoms that leave us unsatisfied, befuddled but bewitched. Factories and modern warfare are phantasmagoria's hidden engine room; shops, world exhibitions, funfairs, and the entertainment industry provide its samplers and training manuals: 'what the amusement park achieves with its dodgem cars and other similar amusements is nothing but a taste of the training that the unskilled labourer undergoes in the factory – a sample which at times was for him the entire menu.'[20]

But if the phantasmagoric form is one of the determinants for the withering away of experience, it might (and this was the glimmer of hope caught in the nightmare of actuality) also provide the antidote. For experience to be rekindled as a form of knowledge and wisdom, it requires new artistic forms that are adequate to the material circumstances they are confronting. It was clear to Benjamin that the narrative forms of nineteenth-century realism were not able to convey much about the dislocated intensities of modern life. Cinema, especially montage cinema, might be better placed. But this is an argument that is caught within a conflict: in this case (and cinema is an obvious candidate for the label phantasmagoria) the medium is simultaneously both poison and cure. Cinema (along with the entire range of phantasmagoria) is partly responsible for the withering away of experience (it is most often a form of distraction, rather than a critical reflection on modern life), and yet it might also have the capacity to furnish new cultural forms that might offer a new sort of productive reflection on life (a *distracted* critical reflection). Thus cinema might be seen as phantasmagoria with the potential to produce critical phantasmagoric work: work that uses the phantasmagoric form against itself, as new perceptional form.

This argument is also spelled out by Georg Simmel in his account of the 1896 Berlin Trade Exhibition. Simmel's understanding of modern life is premised on a psychological account of what happens when a society rapidly increases the amount and intensity of stimuli (particularly in its metropolitan centres). His is an account that posits neurasthenia and indifference as the two possible outcomes

of modern life. Simmel's interest in the Berlin Exhibition, which at the time was being described as a 'temple to the cult of nervousness,'[21] was directed towards its phantasmagoric qualities (though he does not use this term):

> The way in which the most heterogeneous industrial products are crowded together in close proximity paralyses the senses – a veritable hypnosis where only one message gets through to one's consciousness: the idea that one is there to amuse oneself … Every fine and sensitive feeling, however, is violated and seems deranged by the mass effect of the merchandise offered, while on the other hand it cannot be denied that the richness and variety of fleeting impressions is well suited to the need for excitement for over-stimulated and tired nerves.

World exhibitions, then, participate in neurasthenic culture, paralysing the ability to take stock of what we are experiencing, leaving us caught in the dream world of amusement. Yet because modern culture in general is also involved in draining our nervous resources, the industrial exhibition, ironically, also provides the cultural form that might be able to attract, and communicate with, the modern city dweller. Its potential for acting on phantasmagoric culture, as well as being symptomatic of it, is its secret cargo.

For Benjamin world exhibitions of the nineteenth century were important for understanding modern technological life, because they supplied particularly vivid examples of phantasmagoria which were also related to other cultural forms:

> World exhibitions … provide access to a phantasmagoria which a person enters in order to be distracted. Within these *divertissments*, to which the individual abandons himself in the framework of the entertainment industry, he remains always an element of the compact mass. This mass delights in amusement parks – with their roller coasters, their 'twisters', their 'caterpillars' – in an attitude that is pure reaction. It is thus led to that state of subjection which propaganda, industrial as well as political, relies on.[22]

Like funfairs and technological entertainment, world exhibitions are (in this analysis) forms of propaganda. But here Benjamin is forcing us to rethink what could be meant by such a term: clearly the ideological work (mental propaganda) that a roller coaster can do is rudimentary when compared with a newspaper, a film, or a novel. The clue here is that Benjamin is talking about a propaganda not aimed at the intellect but addressed to the body, and he confirms this by adding 'industrial' to qualify the idea of propaganda. Industrial propaganda (or rather the propaganda of industry) does not just need to convince hearts and minds; it needs to inculcate the senses into a new relationship with technology. For Benjamin what was demonstrated time and again was that this relationship was phantasmagoric.

But while political propaganda conjures up images of mass rallies and hectoring voices, industrial propaganda was often designed to be fun. Indeed for Benjamin the power of phantasmagoria is its pleasurable, playful form. To fully register this insight we must recognize that play is not the opposite of work, for Benjamin. Play

and discipline are not opposed; rather they form the various characteristics that commercial, industrial culture can take. Phantasmagoria is a training ground that foregrounds plasticity and play. Not only does this make it potentially an ally in a fight against social regulation, but contradictorily, it makes it a more successful mechanism for inculcating social habits. In a review of a book on the history of toys, Benjamin makes this crucial point about the relationship between play and habit:

> For play and nothing else is the mother of every habit. Eating, sleeping, getting dressed, washing have to be installed into the struggling little brat in a playful way, following the rhythm of nursery rhymes. Habit enters life as a game, and in habit, even in its most sclerotic forms, an element of play survives to the end. Habits are the forms of our first happiness and our first horror that have congealed and become deformed to the point of being unrecognizable.[23]

The play element in phantasmagoric culture is an invitation into new material environments, an initiation that starts to habituate the visitor to new industrial forms. This passage on play and habit offers the key to unlocking Benjamin's understanding of how modern industrial culture trains the sensorium both to submit to its formal protocols at the same time as it offers the possibility of shaking loose of its disciplinary grip. The function of film, for instance, 'is to train human beings in the apperceptions and reactions needed to deal with a vast apparatus whose role in their lives is expanding almost daily.'[24] The outcome is not necessarily hopeful but neither is it hopeless: industrial modernity trains us to cope with the increased industrialization that is its central characteristic, but in training us in this way it facilitates the possibility of a radical reassertion of our democratic agency over industrial culture. Phantasmagoria, then, is a powerful form for insinuating technological relations at a basic and pleasurable level. Yet the social implications of this are undecided. Play as a form of adjustment and inculcation insists that the human sensorium is always more or less protean, more or less able to adjust and readjust. While it is likely that phantasmagoria is put to use to make adjustments that are accommodating to industrial capitalism, there is also potential for other sorts of experiences, ones that might possibly be utopian or critical, or simply new. If the creaturely self that is summoned by the phantasmagoric is always becoming, then there is always the possibility of becoming otherwise.

Though Benjamin was writing about the nineteenth century, he was trying to make sense of his most immediate present. His interests in the exhibitions of the Victorian era were accompanied by astute analyses of current exhibition practices.[25] His reason for categorizing the second half of the nineteenth century as phantasmagoric is precisely because he could see phantasmagoric forms intensifying in the present. Indeed, the period since Benjamin's death (he died in 1940) might rightly be seen as even more phantasmagoric. In this I think we need to remember the particularity of the term phantasmagoria and how it might differ from other terms: not just 'immersion' but also terms like 'the spectacle' in which it might (at both first and second glance) be seen as aligned. Like Grau's notion of 'immersion,' phantasmagoria usefully orientates us to the formal and phenomenal prop-

erties of displays, but unlike 'immersion' it insists that we inquire into the social role that these forms take. Phantasmagoria suggests both a crisis in experience (a veil of unreality obscuring actuality while enlivening the inorganic environment) and the limited potential of addressing this crisis. It has the same critical power as Guy Debord's notion of 'the spectacle' but it is not anchored to its politics of total refusal.[26] Debord wanted to see the end of spectacular society: for him this meant the total refusal of the spectacle in all its forms. Benjamin wanted to see the end of phantasmagoric culture: for him this had to mean recruiting phantasmagoria to criticize phantasmagoric culture and to awaken us from the sleep of unreason.

If we re-enter the *Labyrinth* pavilion as a phantasmagoric environment we will, I hope, be more sensitive to its playful and bewitching power. The confusion that it seemed to generate will not, now, be seen as a failure to communicate effectively but as a key feature of its phantasmagoric form. I want to suggest, with some trepidation, that the makers of *Labyrinth*, and some of the best commentators on that pavilion, were clearly aware that they were producing and viewing a phantasmagoric form, even though this was not a word they used. A question remains of course: was this phantasmagoria in the service of industrial capitalism (in the loose sense I have been describing), or do we catch a glimpse of what it might mean to use phantasmagoric forms against industrial propaganda? You will forgive me, I hope, if I do not finally give a definite answer to this question. *Labyrinth*, I think, was both, and simultaneously, and it might well be this that makes it such a compelling example of phantasmagoria. But to analyse its phantasmagoric powers we need to look at its production, concentrate on the specifics of its display, and importantly, distinguish the playful energies it mobilized.

Into the Labyrinth

Labyrinth was the product of two groups of cultural workers. The first group, and main instigators of the project, was from the National Film Board (NFB). This group was lead by Roman Kroitor with filming roughly divided between Kroitor, Colin Low, and Hugh O'Connor. Kroitor, Low, and O'Connor had all been involved in developing a documentary poetics at Unit B of the NFB (which was, incidentally, established by the documentary filmmaker John Grierson in 1939), and they had become known for their cinema verité documentary films. The second group was the architectural partnership of John Brand (who was also director of the School of Architecture at McGill University, Montreal), Roy E. LeMoyne, Gordon Edwards, and Anthony Shine.

The film images that *Labyrinth* projected show how close the filmmakers were to the documentary conventions of the time. The material was filmed across a variety of countries and sequences included a crocodile hunt in Ethiopia, the Angkor Wat temples in Cambodia, and images from Russia, the United States, Japan, Britain, as well as Canada. Most of this material was used in the third chamber, which was the most conventional of the various spaces in *Labyrinth*. Using a cruciform arrangement of five screens this chamber showed filmed sequences that worked across the screens as one image, or used each screen independently, or used a mixture of the two (fig. 8.2). The closest and most important precursor to the series of

8.2 Cruciform arrangement of screens for the film *Labyrinth*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada for the Labyrinth pavilion at Expo 67.
Photo courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada.

global comparisons that this part of *Labyrinth* performs is the photography exhibition *The Family of Man*, which was first shown at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1955.[27] *The Family of Man* set about establishing homologies across the structural inequalities of the world, as if to say that we all cry and laugh, get born and die, and the fact that some of us have an excess of material comforts and others lack essentials should not obscure such things. When it travelled to France, Roland Barthes recognized it as performing the most elemental ideological move: eradicating the historicity of social worlds and pretending instead that they are the products of a universal and timeless nature.[28]

In the first chamber (fig. 8.3) a story was told of a child being born – 'a life in the day.' Visitors stood along balconies and looked down at a massive screen that

8.3 Crowds line the balconies of the Labyrinth pavilion to view the multi-screen story of 'a life in a day,' which documents a baby rapidly maturing to become an adult.
Photo courtesy of the National Film Board of Canada.

constituted the floor and across at another screen perpendicular to the floor. This chamber played on the vertical and horizontal aspects of the screens: for instance, showing on respective screens, a vertically standing boxer winning a match, while the horizontal loser is sprawled on the floor. The story of a baby becoming an adult included material that utilized this form – the child becomes a construction worker with the building occupying the vertical screen and the distant ground the horizontal – but it also included material that seems to question some of the more cozy assumptions of the projections; in one sequence there is a street riot, for instance. It is in this chamber that we can see how ideational content (boy becomes man and faces both pleasures and dangers) is secondary to the spatial interest caused by the use of horizontal and vertical screens, and by the viewer being placed above the massive horizontal screen looking down from a gantry. The physicality of movement as a baby moves from one screen to another, from the mother's bed (horizontal) to be picked up by a nurse (vertical), seems designed to cause a vertiginous effect in viewers.

It was Colin Low who was responsible for liaising with the architects and for realizing some of the non-cinematic visual and spatial effects. The maze and the various liminal corridors worked to continue and to intensify the vertiginous experiences that were being generated in the first chamber: 'The maze was three prisms in an octagonal room full of mirrors on all the walls, floor and ceiling. The prisms were made of partial-silvered glass so when the lights were on the audience, it would be the audience reflected back to itself, and when the lights went off the audience and came on in the prisms, it made an infinity of stellar lights. A cosmos.'[29] The maze and the first cinematic chamber utilize play elements that were designed to produce unsettling physical and perceptual effects. They were dizzying, confusing – spatially disconcerting. The gigantic swoops and falls of the first chamber were followed by the mirrored light show of the maze – a cosmic depth transformed, in an instant, to a hard surface that brought you face to face with your own image. According to Roger Caillois, in his 1958 taxonomy of games *Les jeux et les hommes* (translated in 1961 as *Man Play and Games*), the vertiginous experience of much of *Labyrinth* would fall into the category of play that Caillois terms '*ilinx*.' While it is a more managed form of '*ilinx*' than some of the examples Caillois uses (which often include dangerous rituals) it still mobilizes the vertiginous energies that Caillois describes. *Ilinx*, for Caillois, 'includes [games] which are based on the pursuit of vertigo and which consist of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind.'[30] For Caillois '*ilinx*' play is distinguishable from games of chance (*alea*), competitive games (*agôn*), and forms of mimicry. Of course, many forms of play combine a number of these elements, but it seems clear to me that the sort of affects associated with phantasmagoria are best seen as *ilinx* play. *Ilinx* is not rule-bound, nor is it primarily expressive of the world already perceived: its pleasures revolve around a new and unsettling relationship with the world. It momentarily dissolves the architecture of the self and ego. The vertiginous nature of *Labyrinth* (its *ilinx* aspect) is part of what energized the visitor, instilled a fraught pleasure (of 'voluptuous panic'), and contributed to the pavilion's mythological atmosphere. This was also something

that was encouraged by the choice of images. Indeed the filmmakers had sought out the advice of the Canadian literary theorist and tracer of literary archetypes, Northrop Frye, when they were planning the pavilion.

For Roman Kroitor *Labyrinth* (or *Labyrinthe* in French) was set to revolutionize the form of cinematic narration and performance:

> New kinds of storytelling and new audience tastes will result from this technology. People are tired of the standard plot structure. New film experiences will result, in which there'll be a tight relationship between the movie and the architecture in which it's housed. We took a step in that direction in *Labyrinthe*. A new language is going to develop. There are ways in which shaping the relationships of images cuts through the superficial realities and reaches something deeper.[31]

As a filmmaker it is understandable, I would assume, that Kroitor thinks in terms of the future of cinema. Yet from this perspective *Labyrinth*, and most of the other expanded cinema forms at Expo 67, seem eccentric – blips of technological experimentation that never make it into the front rank of society's culture industries. There might be a range of explanations for this; for instance it would not be hard to provide a compelling account that argues that the possibilities that expanded cinema represented in 1967 were soon eclipsed by other possibilities, not the least of which was the massive and continuing expansion of television. But part of asking historical questions about a cultural formation necessitates asking questions about what it *is* that is being historicized. It is only by being able to describe and characterize some*thing* that we can see it as 'belonging' – or rather, intermingling and connecting – to a particular historical sequence (of items that are similar or distinct). The question that *Labyrinth* raises concerns its relationship to cinema: should we see *Labyrinth* as part of a history of cinema or part of something else? From the evidence of the commentary surrounding them, these expanded media spaces were not always thought of in terms of cinema. Or, more pointedly, the best of the contemporary commentary is engaged in asking questions about the kind of media forms that were being staged. Kroitor has a sense of this when he is describing the importance of combining the architectonic and the cinematic. Roman Kroitor went on to develop IMAX, a large-format cinema that has some of its antecedents in Expo 67 and *Labyrinth*. Yet to see IMAX as the main or only outcome of *Labyrinth* is to emphasize one minor element of the pavilion and to ignore other larger but more dispersed factors. The expanded media being developed by pavilions like *Labyrinth* suggest that architectural history as much as cinematic history will be germane to its analysis. In this way the study of phantasmagoria will need to exceed disciplinary specialism if it is going to catch the particularities of specific forms.

To my mind the commentary that most convincingly describes and conceptualizes *Labyrinth*, by catching something of its problematic phantasmagoric dimensions, is provided by a British architect, Jeremy Baker, living in Montreal at the time. One of the reasons that it is convincing is that it attends to *Labyrinth* as a spatial experience. It is also convincing, not because it tries to explain *Labyrinth*, but because it struggles to describe and name something that as yet has no name

– it is trying to describe an emergent form. It is worth giving Baker some room here:

> Labyrinth … has created a new space without even the use of film. Connecting its two film display spaces (there isn't an existing word to describe them) is a series of meditation galleries. They have none of the recognisable hardware of spaces; no walls, no ceilings, no views; this is true software space, in which, without any physical change, the whole atmosphere can be made terrifying, exciting or contemplative. The architectural significance of this is two-fold. First the effects are just too powerful to ignore; when you have got used to the excitement of software space, it is impossible to be thrilled any more by the conventional space system. It is a difference in the scale of excitement. Secondly, as the *New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther said, 'the nature of the architectural surround is becoming more and more a factor in the compound of this nameless medium.' Similarly any conventional space, however well designed, cannot compete with the thrills and effectiveness of the software spaces. These suggest what might happen when the limit has been reached with what can be done with the standard methods of designing interiors. In the same way that the new spaces are multi-media, so they are multi-purpose. The fun life has merged into the education system, and it is perhaps the influence of Expo that the medium has suddenly developed along didactic lines.[32]

The architectural perspective is crucial here; what is being described is the design of interior space, where the architecture itself takes on the condition of being a projection, an image. Here the materiality of the immaterial is of central concern, and we should note that it is not the film chambers that are the focus of attention but the connecting chamber of the maze and adjoining corridors. We should also note how this connects to Benjamin's description of phantasmagoria as orchestrating the energies of the funfair for pedagogic purposes. We might also want to notice the way that Baker describes the interior as 'software space,' as a space whose virtuality can only be described in terms of an emerging computer culture. For Baker this space is forceful, energized, and didactic.

Yet the question still remains: could *Labyrinth* awaken its visitors from the dreamworld of industrial capitalism, or was it destined to simply maintain the hypnosis that Simmel recognized in Berlin? To my mind *Labyrinth* was a site and a moment that was unresolved, that had not finally decided where it should or could direct its energies. Kroitor was clear that it should sustain a dreamworld, but what kind of dreamworld was not clear: 'A long time ago, when we started working on it, I said to the other people involved that the ideal effect would be like a very real, very vivid dream which you don't really understand. You know only that something inside it is explosive and important. The film is addressed only about twenty per cent to the ordinarily conscious part of the mind, and eighty per cent to the rest.'[33]

The dreamwork of the pavilion was designed to allow for new perception, and like many of the other pavilions the dream was fashioned from banal elements (the residues of the workaday world). Even Robert Fulford, an enthusiastic champion of Expo 67, recognizes how empty such images could become: 'after a while one

became used to a set of visual clichés – babies with umbilical cords, steel mills, teenagers dancing to rock bands, cars (or motorcycles) racing down highways, rocket-ships blasting off.'[34] Such images were often fantasy sequences, wish fulfilments, and celebratory mirages that veil more traumatic material: 'Stand up, Canada, and take a bow: In record time, you've built the greatest world exhibition this earth has ever known. You've proven that "the quiet people" can make dreams as big as their land come true.'[35] *Labyrinth* exhibited its fare share of banalities, of a vague universalism, but still there is something there – in the maze, in the gantry looking down and across at the massive screens – that suggest its task could never be fully consistent with the task of industrial propaganda. There is, I think, no way of fully resolving how we assess the phantasmagoric impact of *Labyrinth*, but it is worth finally, and all too briefly, casting it within the context of Expo 67 (as I did at the start of this essay) to get some sense of its comparative phantasmagoric address.

The Phantasmagoria of Expo 67

Expo 67, like most international and universal exhibitions, was a phantasmagoria, a dreamland: a dreamland of nation-building, of conspicuous consumption, of industrial promotion, and of the occasional reminder of the structural inequalities that underwrite this culture. The fantastic and the virtual seemed to overcome the fixity, the limitations of material life. Perhaps the most phantasmagoric aspect of Expo 67 was the site itself. Expo 67 took place in a newly fabricated Montreal. In the years leading up to Expo 67, Montreal's mayor, Jean Drapeau, undertook a building program that was unprecedented in scale. One important aspect of this was the extensive Metro system that started running in 1966; another was the Expo site – now mostly a public park. The Expo site included two islands in the St Lawrence River – Île Sainte Hélène and Île Notre Dame – as the main landmasses for the Expo which would be connected by underground tunnels and above-ground bridges. The problem was that only one of the islands existed when Expo 67 was being planned in 1962, and that island was far too small for the planned exhibition site. During 1963–4, the island of Sainte Hélène was extended so that it was twice its original size, and the island of Notre-Dame, which was just a few acres of mud flats, was created *ex nihilo*, fashioned out of rocks and earth. For the island of Notre-Dame, 26,970 feet of external walls had to be raised along with 21,150 feet of internal protection walls. This new landmass was created with 6,825,000 tons of rock, either dredged from the river or taken from the Metro construction sites.

The site itself represents a newly configured phantasmagoric urban space, a new land geography that treats physical space as manipulable, as endlessly mutable space. There are links, then, to be made between the 'software' space of *Labyrinth* and the manipulated landmass of the Expo site and Montreal's new transport infrastructure. Similarly, the phantasmagoria of *Labyrinth* can be linked to pavilions like the U.S. pavilion, which offered an array of oversized artworks and NASA paraphernalia inside the massive geodesic dome designed by Buckminster Fuller. If nothing else they are linked by the vertiginous scale of their spectacular displays. But these connections are not the whole story. Commentators saw in *Labyrinth* a

certain refusal of the commodification that seemed to characterize the U.S. and other pavilions: 'It is perhaps the only theme pavilion which doesn't take progress for granted, and insists on taking a personal view of man. "You are the hero" says Labyrinth, not "you are the product." It's really an essential stop on the expo tour … but line-ups are long, and slow.'[36]

I have been claiming that what could be said about *Labyrinth* and other displays at Expo would depend on how we recognized them as material things. Recognizing *Labyrinth* as part of the *longue durée* of the phantasmagoric means that we need to inquire into the practical and material capacities of the display, look at the kind of sensorial training that a display could perform, ask what kinds of routines such a machine was a preparation for. Just as the department store never realized the emergent practices of the arcades in Benjamin's account, so the various technological progeny of *Labyrinth* (IMAX, for instance) never realized its potential. The banal images that *Labyrinth* uses in its film chambers prevent us from recognizing its untapped potential as a phantasmagoric machine. We need, I think, to grasp it as a contradictory machine. As a political machine it performed identification with the alibis of universalist humanism; as an industrial machine it worked to unhinge any form of identification. For the former the energy of *ilinx* works to perform a pedagogic duty; for the latter the same energy exceeds its duty, working to unthread the pedagogic relationship. And it is here that the maze and the corridors, the actual software space, seems so much more important than the film chambers. It is here where the phantasmagoric is not aimed at destabilizing identity for the purpose of re-securing it. In the maze *Labyrinth* is simply in the business of unwinding the ties that bind. And here the vertiginous energy is aimed at nothing but the potential to be otherwise: 'when the lights were on the audience, it would be the audience reflected back to itself, and when the lights went off the audience and came on in the prisms, it made an infinity of stellar lights. A cosmos.'

NOTES

1 The research for this essay was funded by the British Academy and was facilitated by the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

Robert Fulford, *This Was Expo* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 87.

2 The Canadian Corporation for the 1967 World Exhibition, *General Report, Expo 67: Universal and International Exhibition of 1967*, 5 vols (Ottawa: Queen's Printers for Canada, 1969), 2831.

3 *General Report, Expo 67*, 509.

4 Fulford, *This Was Expo*, 90.

5 'Psychedelic Experience without LSD' is the title of *Architecture Canada*'s article on the Kaleidoscope pavilion. See *Architecture Canada*, October 1967, 52.

6 Fulford, *This Was Expo*, 91.

7 Ibid., 95.

8 Bill Bantey, *Montréal*, January 1967, 5.

9 See Jeffrey Stanton's Expo 67 website (1997), http://naid.sppsr.ucla.edu/expo67/mapdocs/cinema.htm (accessed 4 September 2006).
10 Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2003), 8.
11 For instance Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
12 When it does attempt social explanation, for instance in the large chapter on 'the Panorama of the Battle of Sedan,' it is often highly truncated and unconvincing in its conceptualizing of these cultural forms as social machines. Grau's claim that the Sedan panorama reverses Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, for instance, seems particularly underdeveloped.
13 Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1* (1867), trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 165. Translation adjusted to bring it closer to the original German.
14 Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), chapter 6.
15 As I write, UK television is showing advertisements in which mobile phones commit suicide because they are ashamed of how old-fashioned they are, and blackcurrants fight tooth-and-nail to be included in a fruit cordial.
16 See Terry Castle, 'Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie,' *Critical Inquiry* 15 (Autumn 1988): 26–61, for the best analysis of early phantasmagorias.
17 Walter Benjamin, 'Exposé of 1939,' in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 14.
18 For instance, in Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000.)
19 Mapped out in essays like Walter Benjamin, 'Experience and Poverty' (1933), in *Selected Writings: Volume 2, 1927–1934* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 731–6, and Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Observations on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' (1936), in *Selected Writings: Volume 3, 1935–1938* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 143–66.
20 Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' (1940), in *Selected Writings: Volume 4, 1938–1940* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 329.
21 Berlin neurologist Albert Eulenburg, cited in Andreas Killen, *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 16.
22 Benjamin, 'Exposé of 1939,' 18.
23 Walter Benjamin, 'Toys and Play: Marginal Notes on a Monumental Work' (1928), in *Selected Writings: Volume 2,* 101. This essay was first published in *Frankfurter Zeitung* in March 1928.
24 Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Reproducibility (second version 1936), in *Selected Writings: Volume 3*, 108.
25 See, Walter Benjamin, 'Food Fair: Epilogue to the Berlin Food Exhibition' (1928), trans. Rodney Livingstone, in *Selected Writings: Volume 2,* 135–40. First published in *Frankfurter Zeitung*, September 1928.

26 See Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995).
27 See Eric J. Sandeen, *Picturing an Exhibition:* The Family of Man *and 1950s America* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995). *The Family of Man* went on an extended tour of Canada in the second half of the 1950s.
28 Roland Barthes, 'The Great Family of Man' (1957) in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Granada, 1973), 100–2.
29 Colin Low, 'Interview II,' *Take One: Film and Television in Canada* (Winter 2000): 32.
30 Roger Caillois, *Man, Play and Games* (1958), trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 23.
31 Roman Kroitor, cited in Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), 352–4.
32 Jeremy Baker, 'Expo and the Future City,' *Architectural Review* 142, no. 846 (1967): 154.
33 Roman Kroitor, cited in Fulford, *This Was Expo*, 95.
34 Fulford, *This Was Expo*, 88.
35 Editorial in *Montréal*, May 1967, 2. Canadian national identity, and the impossibility of generating a consensual image of Canada, is obviously a context that a more detailed analysis of *Labyrinth* would need to address. In concrete ways Expo heralded the beginnings of the Parti Québécois and a much-intensified independence struggle; it also saw important examples of First Nations consciousness-raising. In this 'traumatic' context an address to the kind of universalism peddled by exhibitions like *The Family of Man* must have struck many as decidedly conservative.
36 'Expo Inside Out!' *Omniscope Magazine*, 1967, 22.